stitutions, as an expression of a definite scale of values or principles substantially different from those prevailing in Latin America, Europe, and other parts of the world. I do not believe that the difference in the attitudes of the Catholic and Protestant theology toward property, acquisition of material goods, and economic activity in general explains the divergence in economic and social trends in the United States and South America—a theory popular in Latin-American countries. Particular features in socio-political institutions and ideas in the United States can be explained, of course, by historical factors. But such an explanation simply traces back the origins of certain phenomena; it offers a rationale of what has happened, instead of showing why things have happened this way.

My impression has been that the prevailing pattern of thinking in the United States is pragmatic rather than deductive; it moves from observation, experience, and emotion to action, rather than from general premises to conclusions. This approach to reality is plebeian rather than aristocratic, searching and active rather than contemplative. An American seldom starts from general concepts and principles, but looks ahead for a conclusion. If the conclusion is in harmony with his own experience, emotional inclination, or prejudice, he readily accepts the theory supporting this conclusion. He is ready to change his views in the light of a new experience—new facts or what he considers new facts. But he is not likely to change his attitude toward practical problems because of a change in his general views on human society, history, or ethics.

It seems to me that the social philosophy of the great majority of the American people does not go deeper than a very general yearning for fair play, justice, decency—without further definition of what is fair, just, and decent. Perhaps that is an asset of this country. Its political thinking may be volatile and superficial, but the country is immune to the attacks of mass insanity induced by fanatical faith in some abstract dogma, such as Fascism, Nazism, or Marxism, a dogma that pretends to enunciate absolute truth and demands from the people blind submission to the logic prescribing the path from this truth to inescapable conclusions.

MATERIALISTIC AMERICA

Many Europeans believe that the United States is the land of the golden calf. This notion was firmly established long before World War I, when poor farmers and workers prevailed in the flow of European immigrants to the New World and rich Americans came to Paris, London, and Rome in search of ways to spend their dollars.